United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council strongly supports Secretary-General's decision to send technical investigative team to Somalia; General Aidid reportedly blocking deployment of United Nations security personnel.

+ Nearly 800 Somali boat-people authorized into Kenya, following negotiations between local authorities and representatives of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative to South Africa, continuing official visit, meets broad spectrum of political and community leaders.

+ Participants in United Nations European Seminar on the Question of Palestine in Malta today propose measures to protect Palestinian people in occupied territories.

+ Team of experts sent by Secretary-General to Azerbaijan to investigate claims of use of chemical weapons by Armenian forces reports that they found no evidence of such use.

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The Security Council last night strongly supported the Secretary-General's decision to dispatch a technical team to Somalia to examine the possibility of monitoring cease-fire arrangements and deploying United Nations Military Observers in south-west Somalia, the feasibility of an "arms for food" exchange programme, the need for security forces to escort and protect humanitarian aid activities and the role of the United Nations in assisting the re-establishment of local police forces.

In unanimously adopting resolution 767 (1992), the Council also approved the Secretary-General's proposal to establish four operational zones in Somalia as part of the consolidated United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). The text requested Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to make

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full use of all available means and arrangements, including mounting an urgent airlift, in accelerating the provision of humanitarian assistance to the affected population in Somalia which is threatened by mass starvation.

In addition, it called on all parties, movements and factions to cooperate with the United Nations with a view to the urgent deployment of the United Nations security personnel. In the absence of such cooperation, the Council did not exclude "other measures" to deliver assistance. The Council also reiterated its appeal to the international community to provide adequate financial and other resources for humanitarian efforts in Somalia.

For its consideration of the situation in that country, the Council had before it the Secretary-General's report on Somalia in which he concluded that the United Nations must "adapt" its involvement there, and that its efforts must be enlarged in an effort to bring about a cease-fire throughout the country, while at the same time pressing forward with parallel efforts to promote national reconciliation.

In a separate development, the Spokesman for the Secretary-General said today that there were reports that General Mohammed Farah Aidid, President of the United Somali Congress, was refusing to allow the deployment of 500 security personnel foreseen in the Security Council resolution. Negotiations were going on now between the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, and General Aidid in south-western Somalia.

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Nearly 800 Somali boat-people, seeking asylum in Kenya, have been evacuated from two vessels which arrived off that country's coast six days ago. The Kenyan authorities permitted the asylum-seekers to disembark after negotiations with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The Kenyan rescue comes just one day after the Security Council called for an urgent airlift to supply relief assistance to Somalia, where an estimated 4.5 million people are facing starvation and death. The civil war in Somalia has sent some 800,000 people fleeing to neighbouring States, including Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen and Kenya, which now hosts 330,000 refugees.

The UNHCR report today said that most refugees, although exhausted, were in good shape.

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Continuing his official visit to South Africa, the Secretary-General's Special Representative to that country, Cyrus Vance, met yesterday with a number of political and community leaders with a view to making the widest possible recommendations to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Among the officials with whom Mr. Vance held talks on Monday were: the Chairman of

the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation; the Head of the Independent Board of Inquiries; a senior judge of the Supreme Court, in connection with constitutional issues, as well as Members of Parliament, Lawyers for Human Rights and members of the Patriotic Front, parties to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA).

Over last weekend, Mr. Vance held meetings with the leadership of the Communist Party, members of CODESA and senior government officials.

Last Friday, the Special Representative had met separately with Archbishop Desmond Tutu; the Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry into public violence; the Head of the National Peace Committee; a group of church leaders, and leaders of the Democratic Party.

Mr. Vance - appointed Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in South Africa on 17 July - is expected to leave that country for New York on 31 July. His mission - in line with a Security Council resolution adopted 12 days ago - is to recommend measures which "would assist in bringing an effective end to the violence in South Africa, and in creating conditions for negotiations leading towards a peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa".

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Participants in the United Nations European Seminar on the Question of Palestine taking place in Qawra, Malta, today proposed measures that could be taken by the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, the international community and non-governmental organizations to protect the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories. Panelists addressing the three-day Seminar organized by the Palestinian Rights Committee suggested, among other ideas, lobbying governments to remind them of their duty to secure Israel's compliance with the Convention, and a letter-writing campaign to elected representatives on the issue of human rights violations by Israel.

Addressing the meeting yesterday, Guido de Marco, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, said that prospects for positive movement on the question of Palestine had never been more encouraging than at present. He said Malta identified itself with the cause of the Palestinians and also understood the position of the Israelis, and he stressed that it was his belief that the two Semitic peoples must learn to live with each other in peace and freedom.

In a message to the seminar, Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said the people of Israel had voted for peace and the PLO welcomed that long-awaited change, particularly after years of political gloom and religious and political extremism created in the region by Likud Governments.

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Mr. Arafat expressed hope that the new Israeli Government would institute a radical change in Israeli policy in favour of peace. If not, he said, the change that had occurred would be no more than a substitution of names.

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No evidence of use of chemical weapons was found and, although a number of events were presented as being suggestive of the involvement or use of chemical weapons, they all could also readily be explained by other causes. Furthermore, none of the events agreed with the pattern that would be expected from an attack involving chemical weapons.

This is the assessment made by the mission of experts dispatched by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Azerbaijan to investigate allegations by Azerbaijani authorities of the use of chemical weapons by Armenian armed forces against Azerbaijani population.

In a report to the Secretary-General contained in a document dated 24 July, the three qualified experts explained that, after investigation, they had come to the conclusion that "neither the histories told nor the signs and symptoms observed pointed to any of the recognized chemical warfare agents". However, they noted, occasionally individuals "may have reacted to chemical substances that are present in conventional weapons".

The experts visited the area from 4 to 8 July.

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